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Former southwestern Illinois smelter being razed

By Associated Press

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HARTFORD, Ill. (AP) — Crews are knocking down a former copper smelter in southwestern Illinois, but the state's environmental agency says it may be years before the site is rid of toxic slag.

Workers supervised by the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency this week began demolishing buildings on the 230-acre Chemetco site in Madison County near Hartford. The demolition is expected to be done by December.

More than 500,000 cubic yards of processing sludge and other hazardous materials were stored there. Elevated levels of the heavy metals copper, lead and cadmium have been found in sediments in onsite wetlands and a nearby lake.

The state EPA says that waste may take five years to remove.

The site was a secondary copper smelter from 1969 to 2001 before operators filed for Chapter 7 bankruptcy protection.

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